



Communications and Marketing Committee

January 2004

Vision

Role/Scope

The role of the Committee is to provide communication-related services to support the work of the Waterbird Conservation Council. When tasked, the Committee will draw on its expertise and networks to develop the tools and means of reaching out to target groups with selected messages. The “Petrels and People” project (an initiative focusing on the highly imperiled seabirds identified in the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan) is an example of a Council project which the Communications Committee will support.

The role of Communications Committee is also to lead a general waterbird outreach campaign, built around a positive theme and message. In doing so, the Committee seeks to raise awareness about the value of waterbirds, the conservation successes of the past century (including the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative), and proactively counter antagonism towards waterbirds which has or may appear in various sectors of society.

Objectives

- To effectively communicate the actions of the Waterbird Conservation Council, including but not limited to a project focusing on the most imperiled island-breeding bird species.
- Raise the visibility and understanding of the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative in order to maximize partner involvement and investment.
- Develop and maintain a suite of outreach products for selected audiences that communicate positive messages about waterbirds.
- Broaden public involvement in waterbird conservation, by increasing awareness and concern in the millions of people who have indicated an interest by engaging in bird watching and bird feeding activities.
- Develop and implement methods to evaluate the success of communication efforts.

Challenges and Opportunities

Many waterbirds, due to their visibility and beauty, can easily garner positive public attention and support.

Target audiences will be defined based on individual campaigns. However, for the general outreach campaign, tremendous opportunity exists in reaching out to the general public, given that millions have already shown interest in birds by engaging in watching and feeding activities.



Waterbird Conservation for the Americas

Recovering waterbird populations may result in real or perceived conflicts with human interests (e.g., at aquaculture facilities, or with sports fisherman.) A challenge to communication efforts is to focus on the positive, despite negative publicity, and to craft messages that anticipate likely conflicts.

The success of general outreach campaigns is difficult to assess. While evaluating numbers reached is one means (e.g., reach one million people through one or more campaigns), metrics to actually track changes in behavior over larger scales are difficult to develop.

Workplan

Current Membership

Frank Gill (Chair)
Paul Baicich

Megan Hill
Bill Howard

Jim Kushlan
Pat Patterson (co-chair)

- Committee will look for and welcome additional members to the committee both from the Council and outside the council.

Meeting Schedule

Communications Committee will meet via a monthly conference call.

Tasks & Products for 2004

- Communications Plan developed for the positive waterbird message campaign
 - Focus on successes of the last century and on the value of waterbirds. Possibly use an ambassador/signature species (Great Blue Heron) and tie to National Audubon Society's "waterbirds and working lands" project.
 - Promote existing waterbird outreach products (e.g., films or other media) by compiling and posting lists
 - Explore new products (e.g., video or Powerpoint presentation for distribution; promotion of birding festivals focused around large congregations of waterbirds)
 - Explore means of distribution (e.g., Websites; cable TV programming opportunities)
 - Explore use of professional advertising firms in developing themes and products
 - Explore opportunities for assistance with website
- Pilot one significant element from the above Communications Plan
- (As charged by Council) Communications Plan developed for Petrels and People project
 - Showcase island introduced species removal work conducted by Bernie Tershy, Vernon Byrd, and others
 - Focus communications on the specific campaign of conservation action – identify target audience and messages.

Help Needed (could be money, outside expertise, etc)

Costs to be explored once committee actions are further developed.